



# the Pipeline

Oregon Drinking Water News

Volume 29 • November 2014

## Program update

by Dave Leland

This fall, we commemorate the 40th anniversary of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. The Act was passed by Congress in 1974 to protect public health by regulating public drinking water supplies. Amended in 1986 and 1996, the law establishes standards for drinking water quality and authorizes the EPA to coordinate with states, localities and water suppliers to ensure the safe delivery of tap water and the protection of drinking water sources.

Oregon’s current safe drinking water program was established under the 1981 Oregon Drinking Water Quality Act (ORS 448). The Oregon program operated in conjunction with the EPA Region X drinking water program to oversee safe drinking water in the state. The 1985 Oregon Legislature authorized the Public Health Division to apply to EPA for primary enforcement responsibility (“primacy”) in Oregon. Primacy was obtained in 1986, and the Oregon program took on sole oversight of the state’s public water suppliers. Today, the Oregon program carries out a variety of federally-required functions in

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## Oregon’s aging water-treatment facilities nearing end of useful lives with no replacement money in sight

*Reprinted with permission from the Oregonian, September 17, 2014*

Many of Oregon’s water-treatment facilities are nearing need for replacement just as the federal money that financed them is running dry.

And while the state has loans it can provide to help build expensive replacements, it remains far from clear how local communities are going to be able to foot the bill.

That was just one eye-catching fact rolled out during a legislative briefing on the state of Oregon’s water quality Wednesday in Salem.

House Interim Energy and Environment Committee members had plenty of questions, but their agenda was so full that Chairman Paul Holvey, D-Eugene, asked them to submit them in writing to later consideration.

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Visit Oregon Drinking Water Services at <http://healthoregon.org/dwp>

partnership with county health departments and state agencies. These functions include adopting and implementing standards no less stringent than EPA; certifying water system operators and laboratories; inspecting water systems and ensuring that deficiencies are corrected; protecting drinking water sources; and operating the Safe Drinking Water Revolving Fund.

In the approach to the upcoming 2015 Oregon legislative session, the Oregon Health Authority and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality were invited to present on water quality issues to the House Interim Committee on Energy and the Environment. See the accompanying Oregonian news article about the committee hearing. We are not introducing any agency legislative proposals on drinking water in the 2015 session, but proposals may arise from others.

Karen Kelley, manager of our Springfield office, recently accepted the position of Water Utilities Superintendent with the city of Albany. We appreciate her service and leadership in the drinking water program, and wish her well in her new endeavor. Casey Lyon is the new manager of the Springfield office.

We welcome Tia Skerbeck and Alphonso Powell to the drinking water program. Tia manages our local health department contracts for drinking water services. Alphonso is a research analyst in our data management work unit.

Finally, I have been serving as Interim Administrator for the Center for Health Protection since the departure of Gail Shibley in December of 2012. I am pleased to announce our new Center Administrator, Steven A. Wagner, who started on November 1. Steven brings a deep and varied background in public health.

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## Congratulations to our “Outstanding Performers”!

*Jobs well done by the operators of these systems:*

<b>WATER SYSTEM NAME</b>	<b>COUNTY SERVED</b>
Ashland Water Department	Jackson
Avion WC - DRW Tuscarora Rd	Deschutes
Avion WC - Tumalo Rim	Deschutes
Avion WC - Wild River	Deschutes
Black Butte Ranch Corporation	Deschutes
Cascade View Estates	Benton
Casselmans Wharf	Multnomah
Florence, City of	Lane
Jordan Valley, City of	Malheur
Manzanita Water Department	Tillamook
Newport, City of	Lincoln
North Plains Water Department	Washington
NPS Annie Spr:Hq/ Rim Crater Lake	Klamath
Old Sheep Ranch Water Assoc	Curry
Polehn Heights Water Assn	Clackamas
Quail Valley Park Improv Dist	Crook
Sheridan, City Of	Yamhill
Sisters, City Of	Deschutes
Skyridge HOA	Lane
Sunridge Estates	Jackson
Twin Cedars MHP	Linn

These public water systems have most recently met the established criteria for outstanding performance (2/25/2014–9/25/2014).

Outstanding performers are systems with no significant deficiencies identified, as well as no unresolved violations. All systems are evaluated during their routine Water System Survey, and those that meet the outstanding performer criteria have their survey frequency (and fee) reduced from every three years to every five years. To find out how to qualify, visit <http://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyEnvironments/DrinkingWater/Partners/Pages/osp.aspx>.

"We have a lot to cover today," Holvey said. "I just want to be sure we get to everything."

In addition to updates on how Oregon is dealing with the 1974 Safe Drinking Water Act, the committee soaked in water-related information such as:

A total of 28 water-borne disease outbreaks around Oregon since the 1970s have sickened more than 9,000 people.

Since 2008, 103 harmful algal outbreaks, such as the one now affecting the Willamette River in Portland, have been reported in the state's lakes and rivers.

Nearly one in four Oregonians rely on domestic wells for their primary source of drinking water.

Of the 350,000 total domestic wells in Oregon, less than one-quarter have ever been tested for contaminants such as arsenic and nitrate.

Nearly 20 percent of domestic wells tested in Benton County recently tested positive for those two pollutants.

Those problems are likely to do nothing but intensify in coming years, committee members were told, as Oregon tackles drinking-water infrastructure needs expected to cost \$2.8 billion over the next 20 years.

"In the past, federal funding was there for us to take on many of these tasks," said Dave Leland, head of the Oregon Health Authority's drinking water program. "We're now looking at flat or declining federal funding."

State responsibilities for monitoring such things as stormwater, meanwhile, are doing nothing but growing, said Jennifer Wigal, the Department of Environmental Quality's water quality program manager.

In the early 1990s, the state issued almost no stormwater permits, she told the committee. Currently, by contrast, DEQ oversees at least 20 permits for larger cities around Oregon and issues nearly 4,000 such permits for all entities, public and private.

"The universe is expanding," she said.

Comments from Wigal, Leland and others who appeared before the committee will help formulate water-quality legislation expected to be considered when the 2015 Legislature convenes in February.



*Dave Leland, left, and Curtis Cude, both with the Oregon Health Authority, bring members of the House Interim Energy and Environment Committee up to speed Wednesday on the state of water quality in Oregon. Huge needs and lack of money are problems that need to be tackled, they said. (Dana Tims/The Oregonian)*

Dana Tims / dtims@oregonian.com

# **OHA answers to questions submitted by the House Interim Committee on Energy and Environment after the September 17, 2014 OHA/DEQ presentation on water quality:**

## **1. When we think about all the different types of drinking water contamination, where do we need to focus our efforts? (What keeps you up at night?)**

Of most concern to OHA is the catastrophic event affecting public drinking water, such as a waterborne disease outbreak, loss of supply due to a natural disaster (fires, floods, quakes), or contamination of a water supply such as by a spill, algal bloom and toxins, or by deliberate act. We focus our efforts on prompt response to any test results or reports received that could indicate unsafe water, periodic inspections of water systems to identify potential hazards and verify corrections, surveillance of diseases in communities and encouraging water suppliers to identify opportunities to improve resilience of their water supply systems.

## **2. Could you estimate how many Oregonians currently have drinking water that doesn't meet drinking water standards?**

In recent years, Oregon community water systems have demonstrated that safe drinking water is supplied at all times during each year to 95% or more of the total population served. That means community water systems serving around 100,000 total Oregonians had some period of time during any year when water failed to meet standards for one or

more contaminants. This is a big improvement from earlier periods, when around 85% of the population had water meeting all standards during the year, but we continue to work to improve drinking water safety.

## **3. What are the health impacts of common drinking water contaminants?**

Attached is a listing from USEPA of all 91 drinking water contaminants with the maximum level, potential health effects and sources of the contaminant in drinking water (<http://water.epa.gov/drink/contaminants/index.cfm>). Common drinking water contaminants in Oregon are microorganisms from the environment, nitrate from fertilizer, arsenic from geology and lead from home plumbing. More detailed information on individual contaminants can be found on the OHA drinking water website.

## **4. When are property owners required to test their domestic wells for water quality, and by and large are they doing that?**

When selling a home, owners must test well water for arsenic, nitrates and total coliform bacteria by an accredited laboratory and share the results with the buyer and the state of Oregon within 90 days. Test results are valid for one year (ORS 448.271).

An analysis comparing Real Estate Transaction (RET) data submission and Oregon home sales has yet to be completed. Upon initial review of the RET database, compliance among homeowners appears to be low.

## **5. What do you find when you look at well testing data, and how are you using it to educate homeowners?**

The Domestic Well Safety Program (DWSP) program plans to analyze the RET data to determine if areas of higher risk can be

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identified. This information will help DWSP plan and allocate resources to provide education and outreach to areas identified as high risk and need. DWSP routinely assists home owners and realtors with understanding the importance of well testing, interpreting test results, explaining health effects related to well contaminants, providing information on how to improve water quality through water treatment and/or well improvements, and understanding the importance of protecting their wellhead and preventing groundwater contamination.

**6. If someone has a contaminated well, what can they do about it? What options are there for homeowners who want to do the right thing but can't afford it?**

Treatment options are available to reduce and remove contaminants from private drinking water. At times, well improvement or redrilling may be needed. DWSP's website ([www.healthoregon.org/wells](http://www.healthoregon.org/wells)) lists resources for home owners to access treatment

information and refers home owners to certified well contractors and hydrologists for technical treatment-related questions. Domestic well stewardship, testing and treatment information is widely available on the Internet for free, however, financial assistance to remedy impaired drinking water is not. Local programs may be in place and county offices should be contacted for more information.

**7. Many older homes have lead pipes. Should the water be tested at the tap?**

Oregon homes do not have lead pipes, but plumbing in some older homes have lead-based solder and brass fixtures that can contribute lead to the water. Community water systems must regularly test water at the tap from a cross-section of homes of specified ages and plumbing types, and then alter the chemistry of the water supply if those homes show too much lead at the tap. We encourage homeowners who are concerned about lead to test their water at the tap.

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## **Aging infrastructure? We've got you covered!**

*by Adam DeSempfle*

Oregon's **Safe Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund (SDWRLF)** Letter of Interest (LOI) process has changed. In April 2013, Oregon's Drinking Water Services (DWS) and their partners at Business Oregon's Infrastructure Finance Authority (IFA) removed the deadline date for LOI submittals. Now you can submit an LOI anytime!

**Who is eligible for the SDWRLF?**

Public water systems classified as "community" and/or legally recognized as a "non-profit non-

community" (e.g., schools or parks) are eligible to receive funding for projects necessary to comply with public drinking water standards specified in the 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) amendments. A portion of the SDWRLF targets systems serving fewer than 10,000 individuals.

**What is offered?**

- Loan rates from 1% to 4% based on water system type and status, plus repayment terms from 20 to 30 years;
- Additional subsidies (i.e., principal forgiveness), which can change annually, up to 50% of the total award, not to exceed \$500,000 with an emphasis on "disadvantaged communities"

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and water systems that need to maintain or achieve compliance and/or pose health risks set forth by the SDWA;

- Additional subsidies are offered to disadvantaged systems and/or systems with <300 connections of 100% of costs that do not exceed \$20,000 for feasibility studies and \$15,000 for Davis-Bacon Labor Standards compliance and review;
- Loan servicing by IFA;
- Loans that meet the specific funding and affordability repayment requirements of the water systems and their communities; and
- Free Circuit Rider Technical Assistance for community and some non-profit non-community water systems with populations under 10,000.

For more detailed information, visit the SDWRLF Web page at <http://healthoregon.org/srf>

### **What to do?**

You may submit an LOI for your water system at any time. There is **no deadline date** to submit the LOI. Go to the SDWRLF Web page at <http://healthoregon.org/srf> and visit the LOI section for details.

### **About the SDWRLF program**

There are two state agencies involved in the SDWRLF program. DWS staff performs the technical review, rates and ranks the incoming LOIs against standard criteria for funds. DWS staff also coordinate, prepare and submit the annual Capitalization Grant application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

IFA handles loan determination, processing and disbursement of funds. IFA regional coordinators can be found at [www.orinfrastructure.org/map.php](http://www.orinfrastructure.org/map.php) and can assist loan recipients throughout the life of their project.

In addition and in an effort to reduce waste and be “green,” we are no longer mailing out LOIs to systems and will not be publishing any public notices in the local newspapers. When public notices for comments are published, they will be on the SDWRLF Web page, DWS website and postcards (annually for IUP only) will be mailed out to water systems and other interested parties throughout the state. Notifications will be announced on a quarterly basis if there are projects and/or grant-related updates requiring publication and posted for comments during the months of July, October, January and April.

### **Contact information**

#### **Drinking Water State Revolving Fund**

Contact program coordinator, Adam DeSemple, at 971-673-0422, or by email at [adam.desemple@state.or.us](mailto:adam.desemple@state.or.us)

#### **IFA’s Safe Drinking Water program**

Contact program and policy coordinator, Jeremy McVeety, at 503-507-7107, or by email at [jeremy.mcveety@state.or.us](mailto:jeremy.mcveety@state.or.us), or an IFA Regional Coordinator near you at [www.orinfrastructure.org/map.php](http://www.orinfrastructure.org/map.php)

#### **Drinking Water Source Protection Fund (DWSPF) grant/loan program**

Visit the SDWRLF Web page at <http://healthoregon.org/srf> and select the DWSPF section for more detailed information. You may also contact our DWSP coordinator, Tom Pattee, at 541-726-2587, ext. 24, or by email at [tom.pattee@state.or.us](mailto:tom.pattee@state.or.us)

# MEETING CALENDAR

## Drinking Water Advisory Committee

Oregon Health Authority  
Public Health Division  
Diane Weis / 971-673-0427

January 21, 2015

All meetings are held at the Salem Willow Lake Wastewater Plant, 5915 Windsor Island Road N, Keizer, Oregon

## Cross Connection Advisory Board

Go to: [public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyEnvironments/DrinkingWater/CrossConnection/Pages/advisoryboard.aspx](http://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyEnvironments/DrinkingWater/CrossConnection/Pages/advisoryboard.aspx)

## Oregon Environmental Services Advisory Council

Go to: [www.oesac.org/meeting\\_schedule.aspx](http://www.oesac.org/meeting_schedule.aspx)

# TRAINING CALENDAR

## CEUs for Water System Operators

Check [www.oesac.com](http://www.oesac.com) for new offerings approved for drinking water

## OAWU

503-837-1212

Nov. 18	Submersible & Chemical Feed Pump O&M
Nov. 19	Math for Operators
Nov. 19	SDWA Update
Nov. 20	Submersible & Chemical Feed Pump O&M
Dec. 8	Effective Utility Management
Dec. 9–12	16th Annual End of Year Operator's Conference
Mar. 2	Effective Utility Management
Mar. 2–6	37th Annual Management & Technical Conference
May 5–6	Water (WT/WD) Certification Review

## Oregon APWA Training Program

541-994-3201

Mar. 17–20	Spring Chapter Conference
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## Backflow Management Inc.

503-255-1619

Dec. 16	Confined Space Entry Safety
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## Cross Connection/Backflow Courses

Backflow Management Inc. (B)  
503-255-1619  
Clackamas Community College (C)  
503-594-3345

## Backflow Assembly Tester Course

Dec. 1–5	Portland (B)
Dec. 8–12	Oregon City (C)
Mar. 9–13	Portland (B)
Mar. 23–27	Redmond (B)

## Backflow Assembly Tester Recertification

Nov. 13	Portland (B)
Dec. 11	Portland (B)
Jan. 8	Portland (B)
Jan. 15–16	Portland (B)
Jan. 30	Portland (B)
Feb. 3	Portland (B)
Feb. 12	Portland (B)
Feb. 24	Portland (B)
Feb. 26	Portland (B)
Mar. 18	Redmond (B)
Mar. 19	Redmond (B)

## Cross Connection Inspector Course

Dec. 8–11	Oregon City (C)
Jan. 20–23	Redmond (B)
Mar. 30– Apr. 2	Portland (B)

## Cross Connection Inspector Recertification

Dec. 9	Portland (B)
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## Basics for Small Water System Training Course

503-837-1212

Nov. 12	St. Helens
Nov. 25	Cornelius

## Advanced Small Water System Training Course

541-726-2587 Ext. 25

Four classes held in 2014/2015

Check online by going to [healthoregon.org/dwp](http://healthoregon.org/dwp), then Operator Certification, Small Water System Operator, Advanced Course.



**PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION**

Drinking Water Services  
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Portland, OR 97293-0450

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*Program update... continued from page 2*

He worked with Ohio's Department of Health for 25 years, most recently as chief of the Division of Prevention and Health Promotion. He also held roles in preparedness, environmental health, toxicology and epidemiology. He has a law degree, an M.P.H. in epidemiology and a B.A. in biochemistry. We are certainly fortunate to have a professional of Steve's caliber to lead us into our goal of protecting the health of all people in Oregon.

As I return to my role as Manager of the Drinking Water Program, I thank our drinking water management team who filled in ably for me during my interim assignment - Tony Fields, Karen Kelley, Kari Salis, and Joe Carlson.

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